# California Memory Lab Handbook

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# Introduction

**Memory labs interrupt the political, economic, and social systems that construct our lives. They do so by prioritizing community memory and the cultural heritage of the people.** Some arise out of a desire to collect, others out of a desire to preserve, a desire to shift narratives around collective history, or in response to environmental and colonial disasters and the loss of people's memories. This handbook serves to share out the knowledge gained from interviewing fourteen memory labs around California. Synthesizing their ideas and anecdotes, the handbook elaborates on larger takeaways and provides resources for folks interested in starting up a memory lab or seeking advice for maintaining one. Memory labs have the opportunity to digitize people's materials and preserve individual, familial, and collective memory in service of the historical record. **Digitization** is what happens when information is transferred from a physical format to a digital format. This transfer is not preservation in itself, but what is accomplished post-digitization can be. **Preservation** comprises the various actions that maintain access to memory and heritage into the future. The goal of this handbook is to showcase how memory labs can achieve both.

This resource can be read from front to back, or individual sections can be reviewed independently. Whatever the case, we hope it will provide you with clarity, insights, ideas, and inspiration.

The handbook begins by discussing community and providing insights into identifying and supporting the communities you will be working with. Then, we dive into the various approaches and models that labs take to conceptualize how they will support their patrons. Identity and design reflect on the considerations behind naming and creating an identity for your lab. When you are ready to set up your lab or need some help fine-tuning it, head to the setting up shop section to hear from the labs we interviewed about what went well and what did not when they were putting things together. Equipment takes you through some of the major considerations when buying the hardware and software necessary to digitize a patron's materials. For help with guidelines, training, orientation, documentation, workflows, and general lab governance, head to policies, systems, and procedures. When you are ready to welcome patrons into the lab, review our recommendations for managing expectations. Outreach and fundraising will provide you with numerous marketing, programming, and fundraising ideas. Finally, evaluation and sustainability contemplate how you keep your memory lab going and what you can do to ensure you stay true to your mission. As a bonus, make sure to consult the resources section for a list of memory labs around the state and opportunities for further learning.

We may make references to "your memory lab," but ultimately you'll find a way to describe yourselves. There are countless notions of what a memory lab is. Here are some examples from the folks we interviewed.

> *"Memory labs remove fear around digitizing and putting files online. It's an opportunity to deconstruct and demystify the technological barriers that keep people from preserving their personal and community memories."*
>
> –Inyo County Free Library

> *"It's not just about digitization; it's about access, community, and memory work. The memory lab is a way for people to access and digitize their own materials."*
>
> –Karuk Tribal Library

*“Digital objects are perhaps the best way to contend with and combat the colonial capitalist, white, Eurocentric, heteropatriarchal histories in archives. They are a way to expand beyond what’s on the shelves and in the drawers.”*

–National City Library

*“Memory labs ‘Help people to get their memories to be relevant again.’”*

–Orange County Public Libraries

*“It’s all in service of transforming these memories into something we can easily share.”*

–San Leandro Public Library

*“Memory labs are a space where people learn and understand their resources and personal archives; they learn how to handle and care for their materials, and archival knowledge is democratized.”*

–South Pasadena Public Library

*“Everyone was really grateful to have somewhere to go. [Patrons say], ‘Maybe I don’t have to lose these memories.’”*

–Whittier Public Library

*“The idea of the memory lab is wholesale digital preservation. It’s about the entire lifecycle, not just digitization. Memory labs respond to the failure of institutions to care for and figure out how to preserve community memory and the memory of the people.”*

–T.A.P.E. Los Angeles

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# Community

Each memory lab plays a different role in the community or communities it serves. One lab may function to support memory work across an entire county, while another might serve a more local function. When setting up a new memory lab or sustaining an existing one, it is essential to **take an active role in shaping who uses the lab**. It must be a priority to **learn who your community members are**. **Take into special consideration whose memories have been neglected or deprioritized by cultural institutions such as libraries, archives, and museums.**

One helpful strategy is to **think about your ideal patron(s)**. Throughout this handbook, we will refer to memory lab users and patrons interchangeably, but you may have a different way to refer to your active/engaged communities. Who are they, where are they from, what language(s) do they speak, what are their access needs, what are their priorities, what do they hope to gain out of the experience, and what sort of relationship do you hope to form with them?

Revisit conversations and information around your patrons often. **Take note of who is and who is not coming into the lab. Consider how this is shaped by the lab's design, and adjust accordingly.** As Carl A. at National City Public Library's Memory Lab emphasized, "There's so much you'll never know if you don't ask the right question." At the Inyo County Free Library's Memory Lab, they maintain an internal list of patrons and organizations they

would like to reach out to and invite to the memory lab. In trying to expand whose cultural heritage is preserved, it may be necessary to actively invite those who have historically been neglected or actively kept out. Karuk Tribal Library's Memory Lab has demonstrated how working with local historians and other community members can foster connections with patrons who would benefit from digitizing their memories.

**Memory labs are not transactional but rather a mutual commitment to a relationship centered on history, memory, and people.** Consider how you can avoid centering white, Eurocentric history by actively inviting historically marginalized communities into the space. The memory lab serves as a community- and relationship-building endeavor. Your community should be at the forefront of your decision-making. Building and sustaining a lab should be a collaborative effort. See your patrons as informed collaborators and your community as a resource. Sonoma County History & Genealogy Library's Playback Memory Lab noted how patrons often do their own research and bring additional knowledge and skills to the lab. See your community as a resource for sourcing volunteers, workshop leaders, equipment donations, e-waste, pooling money together, and other needs.

**Memory labs are a growing network.** Many existing lab managers and volunteers spoke to a desire for more collaboration and resource sharing. Get plugged into the network through listservs, trainings, and other opportunities. Visit labs in your area and rely on each other for ideas, troubleshooting, and more. Consult the list of Memory Lab locations in California to share with patrons and get to know other labs near you.

## Approaches and Models

When building a memory lab, it is necessary to consider what approach and model will work best for your community. In this section, we break down some examples to give you a sense of what has been done, what has worked, and what has not. **In general, you will decide between a DIY or service-based approach and a fixed or mobile model.** There are myriad ways to put these into practice, and you will likely pull ideas from all four when setting up your lab. Perhaps there are new combinations you will discover in the process. Each section uses one lab as a case study to illustrate how these approaches and models look in practice. The goal of this section is to then help you map out what combination of these strategies will work best for you and your community.

## DIY approach

Do-it-yourself (DIY) is the most common approach California-based libraries have taken when setting up memory labs. **DIY is popular for a variety of reasons, but the most common seem to be: empowering patrons, staffing limitations, and privacy.** DIY is most often employed in a fixed-model memory lab, but a mobile setup is definitely possible. The Tehama County Library Retro Technology Lab is a great example of how to use a DIY approach effectively when working with patrons. Initially, they tried to implement a service-based approach, but they found that it was not sustainable based on their limited staffing and the quantity of materials. Although they are located in a rural community, Tehama has successfully managed to bring community members into the lab for appointments. This is thanks to Eddie P., who works with patrons on scheduling and helps get them started during their first appointment. The lab's users are mostly seniors and people with older relatives. To sign up, they fill out an online form and then coordinate an ideal date and time with him. Before coming in, the staff will conduct an introductory session over the phone or email to prepare them for how the appointment will go. They treat this first appointment as an opportunity to inspect the materials the patron has, manage expectations, and walk them through the various stations. Eddie emphasized the importance of preparing patrons for some of the risks associated with DIY digitizing and fragile analog materials. This has proven successful: when problems arise, the patrons have been prepared to deal with them.

**The DIY approach helps patrons feel their privacy is being protected and respected.** Some patrons may have sensitive materials or materials they do not wish to share with folks outside their family or community. As such, **this approach offers a way to empower communities** to digitize their own memories. If people get emotional, they have privacy to take space for themselves, and there is someone there if they need help or someone to talk to.

**The DIY approach requires a certain level of technical knowledge, but patrons can be prepared with thorough and clear instruction.** Certain communities may feel averse to coming in for an appointment, which may require putting additional resources towards outreach and training. For example, younger generations might feel comfortable with the technology, while older ones may feel overwhelmed or unwelcome. Additionally, as Eddie noted, "Sometimes these people need this stuff more than a rule that we have." In a sense, they will adjust their DIY guidelines in order to help patrons who are having trouble. They

have stepped in to digitize materials for people because they ultimately recognize that serving patrons is the priority. In some capacity, a DIY approach must be adaptable to each person.

There are levels to the DIY approach. While some labs might offer patrons an in-depth orientation and have a dedicated staff member there to support them during their appointment, others can only offer limited assistance. Consider what works best for you and your patrons. Whatever decision you make, think about how you will communicate to patrons and manage what they expect from the memory lab. More on managing expectations to come.

## Service-based approach

**Organizations with a mission to work with specific communities or unique demographics often employ a service-based approach. This ensures they are effectively serving their patrons.** They are less common due to the extensive labor required to sustain them. This approach **offers the ability to provide patrons with archival-quality files and sustain deeper relationships with them**. Teach Archive Preserve Exhibit (T.A.P.E.) is a nonprofit organization located in Los Angeles focused on providing education, preservation, and audiovisual programming for people throughout the city. They are headquartered at Whammy! Analog Media, a microcinema and video store in Echo Park. By situating themselves outside a public institution, they are building a worker-driven alternative that eliminates hierarchies and has a volunteer staff invested in working collectively. Furthermore, bureaucratic hurdles in these institutions can stifle creativity, and high turnover leads to memory labs being neglected.

**When the memory lab is a service, there must be a decision on who to work with and a necessary curatorial intervention.** By this, we mean that partnerships should be entered into with intentionality and care. Digitizing is a longer, gradual process focused on individual patrons. To avoid an overwhelming backlog, think critically and carefully about who your patrons are and be able to say no if you need to. It's better to say no than to risk staff burnout or patrons waiting extended periods of time for their materials to be returned to them. At T.A.P.E. they discussed having to "**learn how to say no to people who treat us like a vendor**." They want to provide high-quality files to people interested in developing relationships

through community building. With DIY approaches there is not much room for refusal. **DIY approaches allow for a more passive engagement with patrons, while service-based setups require an active one.**

At T.A.P.E., they see the service-based approach as an opportunity to provide digitization to people who do not have time to digitize tapes themselves. Interested patrons fill out an online form, which leads to them being contacted by someone at T.A.P.E. The form helps screen patrons and their intentions by asking what they plan to do with the files. If the partnership is a good fit, the patron brings in their tapes to be digitized by volunteers. Each day, volunteers work on creating archival-quality transfers of tapes from various collections. When the files are ready, the patron comes in to view them with Jackie F. or someone else at the organization. They see this approach as a way to create community and form relationships between patrons and volunteers. Some patrons even become volunteers after they have seen the impact of the work. If people want to digitize their own tapes, they can become a volunteer and do so that way.

**When implementing a service-based approach, you may need a much larger staff and at least one person who is fully dedicated to the memory lab.** This can be managed with volunteers or by training everyone at your organization to assist with the lab as part of their job duties. Furthermore, consider the work that needs to be done creating relationships with folks who may not feel comfortable handing over their materials to strangers. While more labor and relationship-building are required, a service-based approach might be the best option for your lab.

## Fixed model

After you've considered your approach, think about what model you will implement to sustain it. **The fixed model is the most common approach for both DIY and service-based approaches. By fixed, we mean a memory lab that stays in the same place.** For example, Tulare County Library houses their fixed, DIY memory lab in the history room of the Visalia Branch Library. They have two stations: one scanning station and one audiovisual digitization station. This is a common approach for libraries. One user who was hesitant to send their memories away to a private company for digitization was excited by the opportunity to digitize them in the memory lab. The fixed model provided them with a space to return week

after week to digitize their collection of Hi-8 videotapes. Patrons come from all over Tulare County and beyond to use the memory lab, as they are the only one located in the Central Valley. They also have a mobile lab, which travels to other branches and museums in the area. Consider a hybrid approach if this is something that might be possible for you.

**The main considerations when setting up a fixed model are the space required to set it up and who will or will not staff it during appointments.** Think about how you want to reach your community—passively through a fixed model or actively through a mobile model. One of the double-edged swords is that you will have regulars. It's amazing to see people coming in frequently and becoming comfortable in the lab. Discuss with your team how you can sustain this while making it accessible and available to new patrons as knowledge of the lab grows.

**Consider how equipment will be secured when the lab is closed and how privacy will be maintained during a memory lab appointment.** Fixed locations become associated with a particular place, while mobile labs have more of a nomadic quality. In Tulare County, the lab is seen as local to Visalia, even though it serves patrons from beyond the city. The Annie R. Mitchell History Room is a relatively private space and is in a locked room, which is closed to the public when a librarian is not present. Reflect on how other priorities, such as programming, might impact what model works best for your community. More information on setup and equipment can be found in later sections of the handbook.

The History Room at Tulare County Library. Memory lab stations are located at the back.

A closer look at the Tulare County Memory Lab's setup.

## Mobile model

**A mobile model is common for memory labs located in unique areas, for folks working with limited budgets, and/or for people who do not have a fixed location to house the lab.** Furthermore, they are strategically employed by communities who wish to travel to patrons who are located far apart. The National Museum of African-American History & Culture's Community Curation Program is an inspirational example of a memory lab that travels across the United States to digitize important collections of Black audiovisual and community history.

On a more local level, the Inyo County Free Library's Mobile Memory Lab seeks to provide digitization and memory preservation resources to a dispersed rural population in Eastern California. Due to limited resources and a desire to travel to their patrons, they decided to set up a service-based mobile memory lab. The mobile model allows them to adapt to the needs and unique situations of the different communities within the county. For example, they have supported the Memories Without Borders project at the Manzanar National Historic Site. **A mobile lab can be an excellent way to reach people who have been stigmatized and surveilled in libraries and other public spaces.**

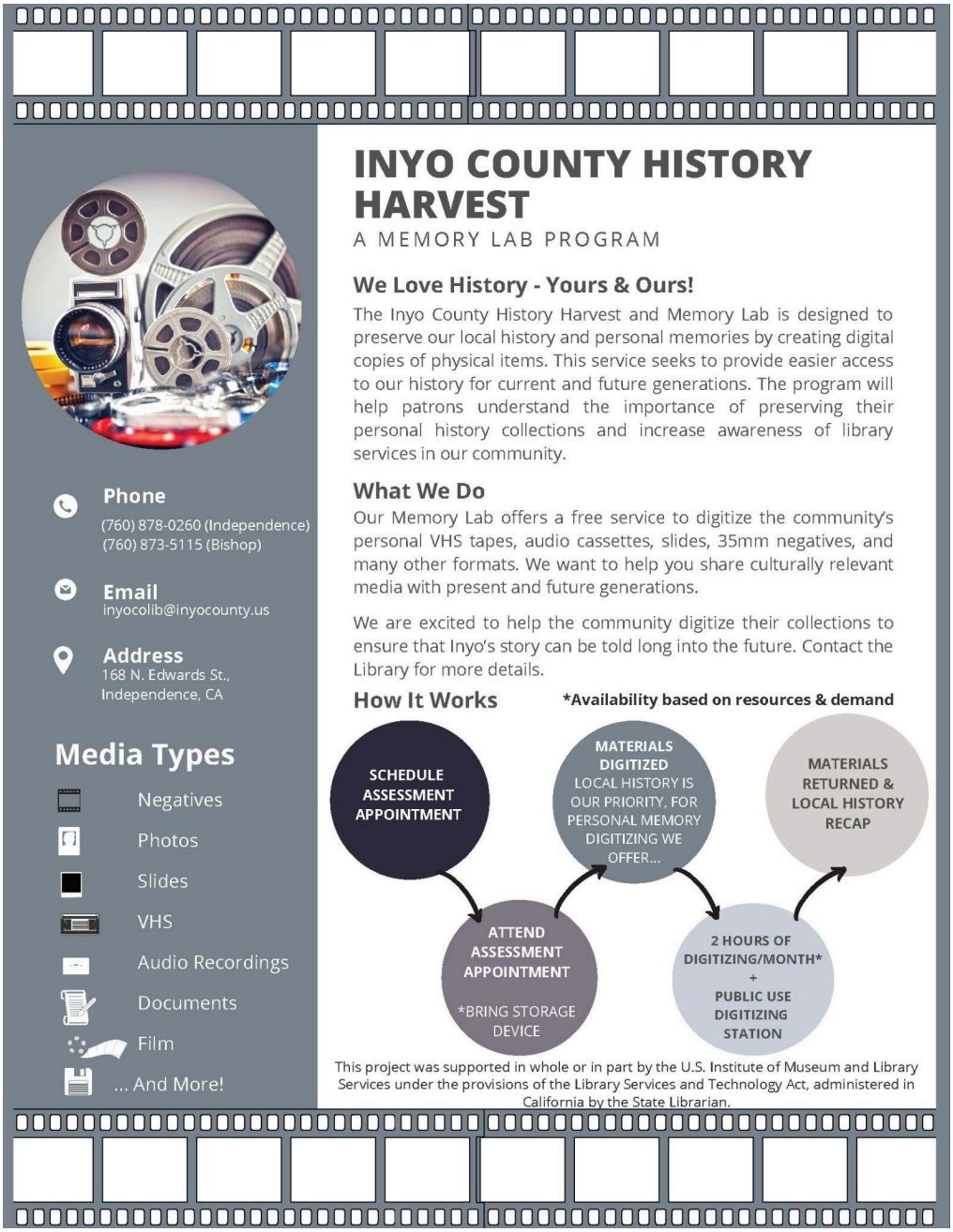
Mobile labs can be DIY, but it may be more sustainable to employ a service-based approach. This is because the staff works with patrons throughout the process, from recruitment to digitization to preservation. Because Inyo County is a low-income library, they do not have a lot of opportunities to replace equipment. Patrons who have never used the equipment before and lack technology skills are more likely to damage it than experienced staff or volunteers. Thus, **the mobile, service-based lab provides some inherent protections to the equipment and the materials.** Additionally, it ensures that staff can prioritize their time digitizing materials as opposed to training people how to use the equipment. **A mobile, service-based model creates opportunities for more types of users to preserve their materials.**

While mobile memory labs work well for people on a shoestring budget, and they may be the best option for small or dispersed communities, there are additional factors to consider. Mike S. at Inyo County noted that the effort required to digitize material off-site is "one of the dark sides of the mobile unit." At most events, people bring more materials than can be digitized

over the course of the event. Normally, they have to bring materials back to a central location, finish digitizing them over the course of the coming weeks, and return them to patrons. By managing expectations and communicating with community members, they have not run into significant issues. This is something that definitely needs to be planned for, however.

Mobile labs take a lot of time, thought, and resourcefulness to put together. **Questions around where the lab will be stored when it is not used, how the equipment will be transported, how events will be scheduled, and more have to be answered. Additionally, think about the importance of security and durability in your setup.** Though it has not been rolled out yet, the Orange County Public Libraries' (OCPL) mobile lab will use road cases (like traveling musicians!) to transport their equipment. This helps protect their equipment from damage as it travels from one location to another. Also, mobile labs allow them to quickly expand their services across several branches, as opposed to setting up additional fixed labs.

OCPL’s mobile lab rack and case.


INYO COUNTY HISTORY HARVEST
A MEMORY LAB PROGRAM
We Love History - Yours & Ours!
The Inyo County History Harvest and Memory Lab is designed to preserve our local history and personal memories by creating digital copies of physical items. This service seeks to provide easier access to our history for current and future generations. The program will help patrons understand the importance of preserving their personal history collections and increase awareness of library services in our community.
What We Do
Our Memory Lab offers a free service to digitize the community's personal VHS tapes, audio cassettes, slides, 35mm negatives, and many other formats. We want to help you share culturally relevant media with present and future generations.
We are excited to help the community digitize their collections to ensure that Inyo's story can be told long into the future. Contact the Library for more details.
Phone
(760) 878-0260 (Independence)
(760) 873-5115 (Bishop)
Email
inyocolib@inyocounty.us
Address
168 N. Edwards St.,
Independence, CA
Media Types
Negatives
Photos
Slides
VHS
Audio Recordings
Documents
Film
... And More!
How It Works
*Availability based on resources & demand
SCHEDULE ASSESSMENT APPOINTMENT
ATTEND ASSESSMENT APPOINTMENT
*BRING STORAGE DEVICE
MATERIALS DIGITIZED
LOCAL HISTORY IS OUR PRIORITY, FOR PERSONAL MEMORY DIGITIZING WE OFFER...
2 HOURS OF DIGITIZING/MONTH*
+
PUBLIC USE DIGITIZING STATION
MATERIALS RETURNED & LOCAL HISTORY RECAP
This project was supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

Inyo County Free Library's Mobile Memory Lab Info Graphic.

## Other considerations

When approaching your memory lab, think about the knowledge and perspectives your staff bring to the table. **It is essential to think archivally about the space and work.** Archival knowledge provides insights into the full life cycle of a patron's materials and ensures they are receiving continuing education around caring for them in the future. **When done well,**

**archival work prioritizes memory, access, and preservation.** Librarians provide essential perspectives to the work as well, especially around working with patrons, managing expectations, and programming. **Take into consideration what forms of knowledge are missing from your team, and seek out community partners who might fill in the gaps.** There is no perfect theoretical or critical approach for memory labs. Instead, they thrive when archivists, librarians, memory workers, and community members bring their insights together in the best interest of the collective. For more information on thinking like an archivist, check out Los Angeles Public Library's Think Like An Archivist! training.

## Identity and Design

After deciding on approaches and models that will work best for your lab, take time to consider what you will name it and draft a mission statement. **This process cements your choices and communicates your goals and intentions to the communities you are serving. Naming the lab might seem like a small decision, but it signals to the public what exactly the space you have created is seeking to do.** How you name a space can become a barrier to someone, particularly if they are not able to grasp the concept or if they feel unqualified to seek out the resource. Can your name be translated into multiple languages, or is it only understood conceptually in English? When planning signage for your lab, think about how patrons will interpret its name for wayfinding and finding resources. One day we hope memory labs will be better known. For now, most people have not heard of or been to one. As such, the name will be their first introduction to the space, and the mission statement will most likely be how they come to understand what they should expect from their time with you.

Tulare County Library posts signs like these around the library to make it easier for people to find the memory lab.

**When choosing a name, remember that your space does not have to be called a memory lab.** Tehama County Library chose Retro Technology Lab as a sort of marketing tactic. The name markets itself, as people are often curious about the lab and what it offers. While more commonplace, the name "memory lab" occasionally causes confusion, and patrons may think it is something that can help them with cognitive function. It may be worthwhile to explore other names, like San Francisco Public Library's DIY Digi Lab. On the other hand, "memory lab" is the most common name, so it might help you to identify with other similar organizations or spaces in your area. **The ultimate goal is to name it something that makes patrons and partners aware of what it is or at least gets them curious to know more.** Choose what speaks to you and your patrons. For some ideas, check out the Memory Lab Locations in California listed in the Resources section.

Logo for Sonoma County History & Genealogy Library's Playback Memory Lab.

**The mission statement codifies what your lab will prioritize. Create one that is dynamic and evolving and grounds your approach.** It can be more general, like Orange County Public Library's, or more specific, like Karuk Tribal Library's. Consider the preservation needs and priorities of your community. Is there a language at risk of going extinct? Are there stories around specific events or histories that only exist on tape? These questions inform your mission statement, which will help guide how you set up, build, and sustain the lab.

**Example Mission Statement**: Sípnuuk Digital Archive, Library, and Museum, Karuk Tribal Libraries

> *Sípnuuk is an online collection of born-digital, digitized, and to-be-digitized contents and materials containing Karuk knowledge, culture, language, traditions, and science. The Sípnuuk Division is currently held under the Pikyav Field Institute within the Karuk Tribe Department of Natural Resources and works to uphold Karuk Knowledge and Data Sovereignty through Karuk-centered Stewardship.*

> *We prioritize materials and content at risk of loss due to environmental and colonial causes such as climate change, natural disasters, and housing insecurity. We caretake and curate materials that hold knowledge, endure Karuk cultural memory, and emphasize our contemporary lived experiences as a People.*

**Example Mission Statement**: OC Memory Lab, Orange County Public Libraries

> *Our mission is to provide our communities the ability to preserve their documents, photos, and audiovisuals through digitization. The OC Memory Lab is a space for free, do-it-yourself digitization that allows users to safeguard their important documents and memories.*

# Setting Up Shop

Once you have decided how you will design your lab, it's time to bring it to life! Setting up a memory lab is a unique process for everyone. Some folks choose to put theirs in the history room of their public library, while others opt for a mobile kit that is stored in a secure location. Regardless of how you set up your lab, there are a few key factors to consider.

## Space

The first major decision is where you will set up your lab. **If the lab will be in a fixed location, think about where your staff will be located, where patrons will sit, and how many stations you will have.** Also, make sure you are located close to a significant power source (such as a wall outlet). **If the lab will be mobile, consider where it will be securely stored between events.** Furthermore, consider where digital and physical assets (if relevant) are going to be stored and how. Refer to the Approaches and Models section of the handbook for additional considerations.

When selecting a home for your lab, **consider multiple options before making a final decision.** Libraries can be an excellent location for memory labs, and most current labs are located in them. This model is not fixed, however, and there are many successful examples of labs that exist outside libraries, including T.A.P.E. and the Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC) Playback Lab. Some exist in makerspaces, such as at Glendale Arts & Culture Library. Marisa Hicks-Alcaraz has assisted in building the Memory Lab at the Urbana Makerspace in addition

to multiple memory work projects around Latinx media histories, home movies, and testimonios. Visit memory labs near you to see what's possible in terms of space and technology. Consult the list of Memory Lab Locations in California for links to websites and further information.

BAVC's Playback Lab is located alongside some of their archival collections. The stations are cozy and offer a private, spacious, and inviting atmosphere to digitize audio and videotapes.

Finally, **it's important to decide whether or not you want to have a virtual presence in addition to your physical one. Making a website is an excellent way to communicate policies, expectations, lab hours, and other information to your patrons.** Additionally, you

can use a website to teach patrons archival and preservation principles. South Pasadena Public Library's Memory Lab website introduces basic ideas around curation, processing, and arrangement. **If you do elect to create one, make sure your website is as accessible as possible: easy to find, and patrons can use it to figure out how to make appointments or get in contact with staff.**

## Staff

Whether permanent staff, volunteers, interns, or a combination of all three, **who works in the lab will have a major impact on who uses it.** Take time to consider who these folks will be, what kind of skills they should have, how they will be trained, and how you will account for staff turnover and other challenges.

**Many labs have shared about the challenge of having only one person dedicated to the lab.** When problems arise, it is easier to solve them as a group rather than on your own. Furthermore, it's hard to keep the momentum going when there is only one person behind the wheel. While we want you to achieve your goals of building a lab, consider that it might not be sustainable to do so by yourself. **Find collaborators who will build the lab with you, who bring different strengths and perspectives, and who will support you and others when challenges arise.**

**Try to have at least one staff member dedicated to the lab's operations.** Then, others can integrate lab tasks into their job duties. Alternatively, think about how the memory lab can be integrated into everyone's duties as opposed to falling on one or two people. **Pull folks from other relevant departments, or work with interns or volunteers.** Interns should be paid for their work. Having library school students and other students work in the lab gives them the knowledge of how to start or run a memory lab themselves. It teaches them about the potential these spaces have. At San Leandro Public Library's memory lab, volunteers make up the bulk of the memory lab staff. They assist patrons with issues or questions that arise during the session.

**Consider the type of staff you have already and the training that might be required.** For example, a librarian might be really skilled at managing a patron's expectations, while an archivist might be better at educating a patron on preservation practices. Think about who is missing from your team and how you might bring them onboard. Reflect on the skills required

to make a good staff member, like creative problem-solving, patience, informed decision-making, and clear communication.

**When considering staffing changes, make sure they will ultimately serve the needs of the community.** For example, don't take on volunteers if they are going to create more work for current staff due to training and scheduling needs. Additionally, consider organizational changes that may create more openings for staff to support the lab. Perhaps you can use the memory lab to recruit volunteers by putting a question on the evaluation or feedback form such as, "Are you interested in volunteering with us?" People become interested in getting involved when they bring in their materials and see what happens. **Volunteering is an opportunity to empower and impart real career skills.** Jessica G. at T.A.P.E. emphasized that you are "teaching someone how to have eight arms," in the sense that archival work requires you to juggle numerous responsibilities at once.

One of the biggest staffing challenges in memory labs is high turnover. **Create a transition plan as soon as possible to make sure the lab doesn't end up in "no-man's land" if someone leaves.** Consider the benefits of mentorship, and if transition is coming, prepare by having new staff members shadow current ones. Think about how you will keep volunteers involved using different incentives such as free admission to events, potential stipends, professional development opportunities, or social gatherings. **Avoid burnout by only taking on the amount of work that can be sustained by the staff you have.** If you can only take on one or two appointments per month, that is totally okay. Remember: the goal of the memory lab is to preserve and sustain community memory, and the staff are just as much a part of this as the patrons.

## Discoverability

**Discoverability is a crucial part of the setup because it ensures people are able to locate and visit your lab.** Consider how your physical setup may aid or cause issues. If your lab is located on the second floor or in a specific room, consider how you might point patrons in the right direction so it is not hidden to them. Perhaps you might put the lab in a room with glass windows where it can be viewed from the outside, or advertise it when people walk into the building. A glass wall can serve as passive advertising but can also create a lack of privacy. Maybe consider a glass wall with a desk separator or use screen protectors to prevent other

people from seeing what is being digitized. Having handouts at the reference desk or checkout area can help improve discoverability as well. On the other hand, if you are trying to limit how many folks come into the lab at once, **consider a tactful approach that selectively advertises and invites specific people and communities into the lab, such as those whose memories have historically been deprioritized, erased, or ignored.**

DIY MEMORY LAB
SAN LEANDRO PUBLIC LIBRARY
LOCATED IN THE SAN LEANDRO MAIN LIBRARY HISTORY ROOM
300 ESTUDILLO AVE, SAN LEANDRO, CA
MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TO DIGITIZE YOUR:
• PHOTOGRAPHS
• SLIDES & NEGATIVES
• PAPER DOCUMENTS
• VHS, S-VHS, & VHS-C
• AUDIO CASSETTES
To schedule an appointment, visit
sanleandro.libcal.com
or call 510-577-3971
The Fast Foto scanner is also available at the San Leandro History Museum during open hours (Wednesday/Thursday 1-4pm). Take the orientation, then drop in to use it.
LEARN MORE AT SANLEANDRO.ORG/MEMORYLAB

This handout from San Leandro Public Library lives at their reference desk.

Located in former study rooms, SFPL's Digi Lab is easily discoverable thanks to the glass walls. They maintain privacy by using screen protectors on the computers.

## Privacy

While you want the lab to be discoverable, you also want to make sure your patrons have privacy. Communities have varying relationships to institutions and information. **If your memory lab is going to exist in a public space such as a library, consider how patrons who have historically been surveilled or kept out of these spaces might feel. Additionally, consider the access needs and protections required by your community.** Should all people have equal access? Are you working with formerly or currently incarcerated people? Materials with specific access restrictions? Undocumented folks? People experiencing homelessness? There are many groups who may be unduly surveilled and/or harmed if their materials are made freely accessible. Especially if the lab is service-based, prioritize privacy and communicate with your patrons. Leece L. at Karuk Tribal Library spoke about how they make memory lab collections accessible through a Maori cultural heritage management system, which provides access restrictions and other protections.

## Accessibility

Melanie B. at Atascadero Public Library's Memory Lab emphasized **the importance of accessibility in setting up their memory lab.** Consider how patrons will come to the lab. Are there stairs? If so, is there an elevator? Is the desk wheelchair accessible? What languages are your materials in? **Remove barriers to entry as much as possible, including overly complicated workflows or reliance on technical jargon.**

Furthermore, **consider how accessible it is to non-users**. Of course you want the lab to be visible and accessible to anyone, but you don't want young children who just had Cheetos to be able to sit down and start using the computer and pressing buttons. Put it somewhere where the nearest staff person is capable of answering relevant questions. For example, near a desk that is staffed by a volunteer who has been trained in the memory lab's operations, as opposed to near someone who has little familiarity with the lab's operations.

## Roll Out

Once space has been allocated and decisions made regarding discoverability, privacy, and accessibility, it's time to make a rollout plan. Many memory labs have employed successful strategies and offer great tips. We have listed a few below. It's important to think through a rollout strategy to anticipate challenges and to avoid overwhelming your staff.

- If your lab has multiple locations or you are considering expanding, OCPL recommends **creating the same setup for each location so that you can have one manual for all of them**. This may be a helpful way to centralize and streamline processes.
- San Leandro Public Library recommends **debuting the different stations in stages rather than all at once**. Start with the scanner, then video, then audio. This will allow staff to get comfortable with the new setup and become familiar with the various stations one at a time, rather than all at once.
- Sonoma County emphasizes **the importance of starting slow with both marketing and rollout.** Begin with just one station and no marketing. If appointments are not booking up, start with a small program and maybe an in-person invitation to select patrons. It's easier to scale up than to scale back.

- **Try to be open on the weekends.** Many labs are only open daytime during the week. Consider who is being left out as a result.

# Equipment: Hardware and Software

When you're ready to start shopping for essential equipment, your choices will largely depend on the format you'd like to support and the availability of legacy audiovisual playback equipment in the market. Every lab setup will be unique, and there are numerous factors to consider when choosing hardware and software. The best advice is to make purchasing decisions **after** you have mapped out your setup. For example, don't buy an AD converter until you are sure it will communicate with your computer.

## Operating Systems and Software

**Your choices for software that communicates between equipment and the computer may be dependent on the manufacturer;** i.e., you can only operate BlackMagic Design Analog to Digital Converters with BlackMagic software. On the other hand, **you may have multiple options to select and customize your workstations**, i.e., transferring sound recordings with GarageBand, Audacity, Reaper, or ProTools. But fair warning: hardware and software don't always play nicely.

First, **there is no "right" system.** Choose the system that makes the most sense for your setup and community. Second, **regardless of which system you choose, you will encounter troubleshooting challenges.** Accepting that will make it easier to not feel like you are making the wrong choice. It's just part of the process!

There are two general categories of software available to you. First, **proprietary software usually requires payment to use, without allowing users to change or improve the source code.** It also comes with license restrictions set by the owner, such as limits on how many computers it can be installed on. Some examples would include Adobe Creative Suite, which can be used to view or edit images or video files, or BlackMagic Design, which offers products that can achieve analog-to-digital transfers.

The second is **open-source software, which is shared freely with everyone. The software's source code is open for anyone to view, use, change, or improve.** It is often free to use, though services or support may cost money, and is typically built and maintained by communities or organizations. One example is vrecord, which is maintained by the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) and is used to capture video signals during analog-to-digital transfers.

**Whether Apple or Windows, compatibility checks should be part of your setup process.** Ask yourself, and maybe your IT department: What operating system are you optimized to use, and what are the most important barriers to address early on? The internet, while not always necessary for use during digitization, is often necessary to download software.

## Hardware Essentials

After you select your system and understand the software you are able to use with your computers, you can begin forming a shopping list for the baseline equipment necessary for digitization. Below we've listed some key pieces of equipment that will be necessary. Take your time and do your research. Consult the Equipment resources located at the end of this handbook for more information.

### Tape-based Video and Audio

**Audiovisual playback equipment purchases will depend on the format**. If you have a VHS, you need a VCR. If you have a ¼" open reel, you need a reel-to-reel, and so forth. Most tape media will need a specific deck for playback and digitization. There is no perfect deck, but there may be a right setup for your lab. Consider your technical knowledge, intentions, and budget.

#### TBC (Time Base Corrector)

**Time base correctors stabilize analog video signals to reduce visual errors**. TBCs also allow you to modify color and brightness. Some professional decks have built-in TBCs, while consumer decks do not. If you choose a deck with an internal TBC, it will be more expensive, but it will simplify your setup. If you choose an external TBC, you will generally connect the deck to the TBC and the TBC to the analog-to-digital converter. Consumer decks might be

able to play consumer-formatted tapes, like extended play (EP) and long play (LP) VHS. Professional decks are normally unable to play these tapes.

### Analog-to-Digital Converter (AD Converter)

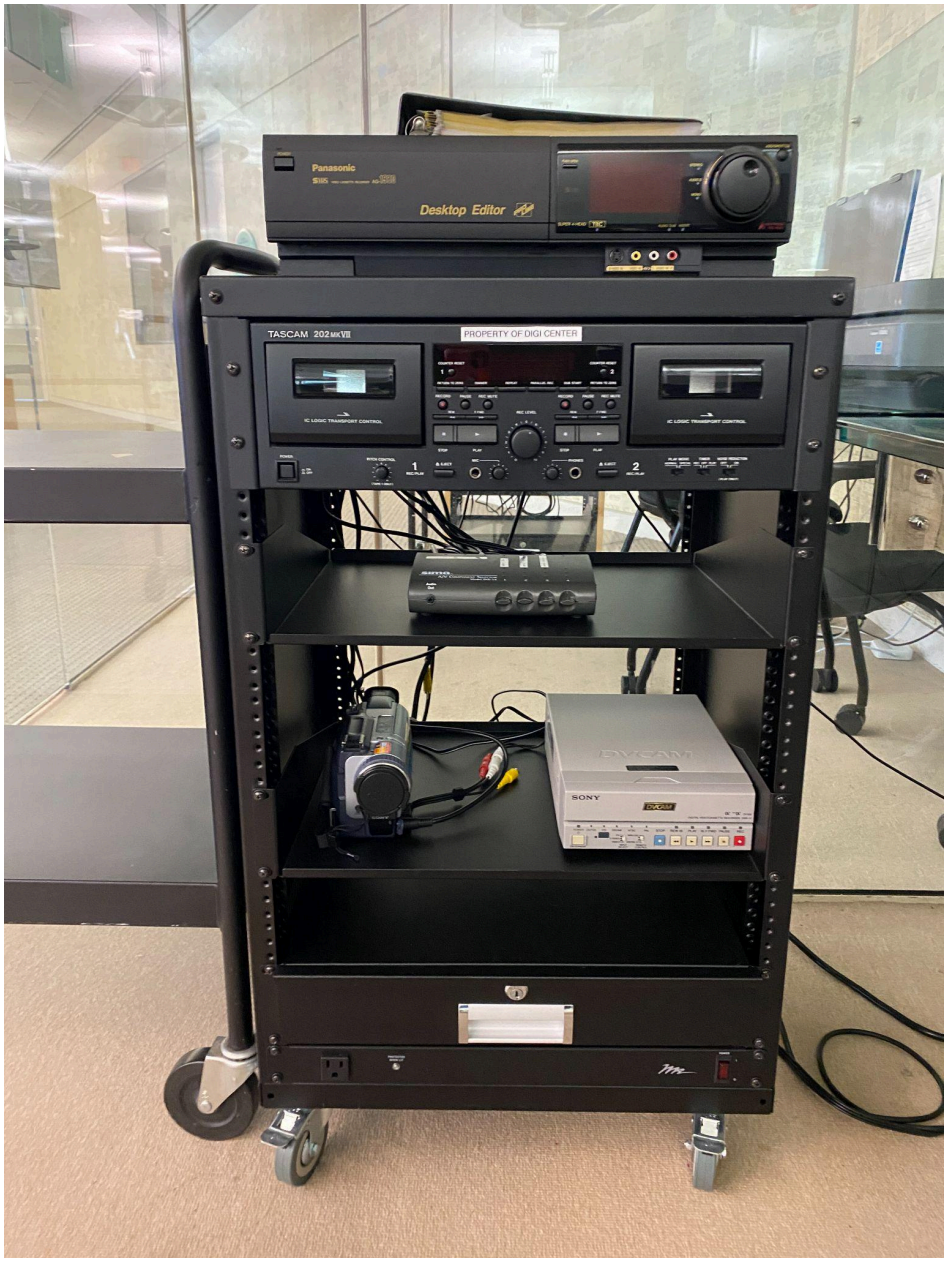
**Analog-to-digital converters are an essential part of any video or audio digitization setup.** They convert analog signals into digital signals, and generally they are the intermediate connection between the deck (or TBC) and the computer.

- For audio setups, make sure the AD converter is able to convert audio signals. For video, make sure it is able to convert both audio and video signals.
- If the lab supports digital video or audiotape, you do not need an AD converter. Instead, digitize using a FireWire, USB, or other connection.

### Cables and Adapters

There are a multitude of connections you can pursue depending on the format. We have broken down some of them below. **The important thing is to ensure that your connection can "speak" to your computer**, i.e., the signal flow is transferring to a desired digital format.

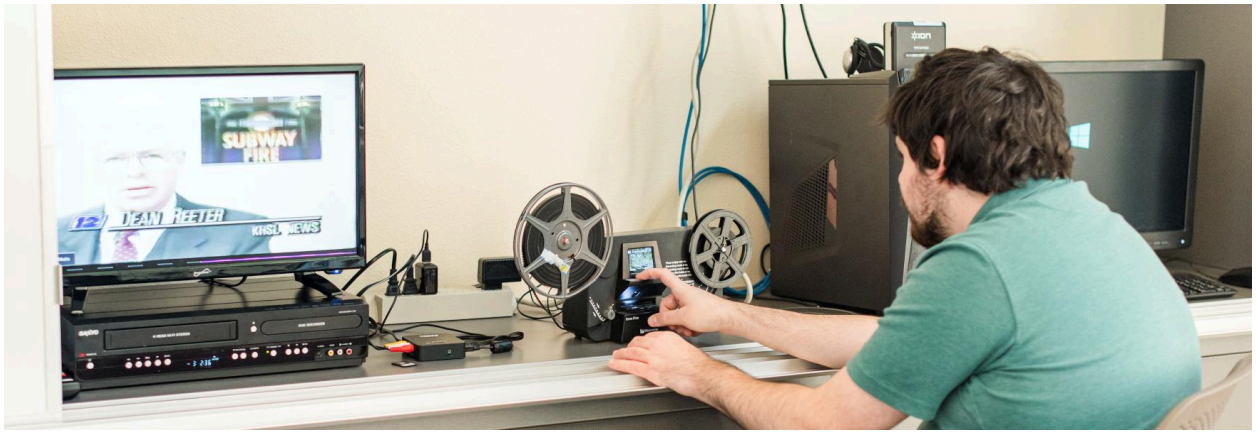
- Video
    - For analog video signals, there are three main connections: composite, component, and S-video. What you decide will depend on your deck, format, A-D converter, and other factors. Many TBCs require a composite connection.
    - For digital video signals, options depend on your digitization setup. FireWire and USB are the most common.
- Audio
    - For analog audio signals, the connections will involve RCA, TRS, or XLR cables. These are dependent on the input/output ports on a deck and AD converter.
    - Digital audio signals are similar to digital video signals and use FireWire, USB, and other connections.




SFPL's DIY Digi Lab video and audio rack.

## Film

Most memory labs work exclusively with 8mm and Super 8 film. These can be digitized using a variety of **film scanners**, from professional grade to consumer scanners. If you elect to support 16mm or other larger formats, you will need a more expensive, professional scanner. **Keep in mind that consumer scanners do not perform archival-quality scans**, but they do provide patrons with easily shareable digital files.




Tehama County Library's 8mm/Super 8 Film Scanning Setup

### Photographs, Photographic Film, and Documents

**Flatbed scanners** have the ability to transfer multiple print-based formats, such as photographs, documents, photographic slides, and film. However, these models may become obsolete. Alternative ways to capture these formats include setting up an **overhead camera capture station**. You can find many resources on Youtube, for example: Setting Up a Digitization Studio with a Camera and Copystand.

## Equipment Compatibility

Not only do you need to make sure your software is compatible with your computer, but you also need to make sure your equipment is compatible with both of them. **Make sure to research compatibility before making any purchasing decisions.**

When purchasing equipment, the San Francisco Public Library found out how important it was to make sure things were **backwards compatible.** Backwards compatible means that analog or playback equipment can capture the signal flow of previous generations of similar formats. For example, some Digital8 tape decks can also play Hi8 and Video8 tapes, which means that these decks are backwards compatible. However, other Digital8 decks can only play Digital8 tapes, which means they are not backwards compatible. Nick from SFPL found websites that gave a lot of in-depth information about deck compatibility. They reference recommendations for Digital8, Hi8, and Video8, and more recommendations for Sony audiovisual equipment.

**Don’t buy more than you can support.** Equipment is only useful if staff capacity exists to sustain it. Sometimes one well-supported scanner is more impactful than a room full of idle decks. Looking back, Rachel F. from Whittier Public Library says, “We would have built on 1-3 items rather than getting one of everything.” Also, **community needs may not match what you predict.** At Tulare County Library, DV and MiniDV are two of their most popular formats even though they’re less well known. Sometimes you don’t realize what you need until you don’t have it. Eddie P. at Tehama Public Library says they should have gotten two VHS setups given their popularity. Since video is something you cannot see without playback equipment, Eddie says patrons are particularly excited to digitize as opposed to scanning photographs. Carl A. from National City Public Library shares, “You never know what format someone will walk through the door with,” but there is a way to find out. **Surveys, conversations, and observation are critical before purchasing.** Start with what your communities most want, then gradually expand.

**Think beyond the purchase.** From cleaning VCRs and rehousing cassettes, the real work happens after the equipment arrives. Documentation, evaluation tools (like POWRR’s tool evaluation grid), and peer support are invaluable. And just in case things go awry (or out of your control), most memory labs will agree: **always buy the warranty. Prepare for the inevitability that software and equipment will go obsolete, break, or malfunction. The key word is "prepare"—what will you do once it does?**

One of SFPL's Digi Lab Stations, featuring audio, video, film, and scanning stations

## Wiring Diagrams and Troubleshooting

**Wiring diagrams** are visual representations of how equipment in the lab is connected. Wiring diagrams help staff (and patrons) understand the physical setup, reduce troubleshooting time, and maintain consistency in use. These documents are not usually public-facing but may be useful when answering technical questions with patrons, potential partners, and training staff or volunteers. They should be a pivotal part of your training.

**Troubleshooting is a natural part of a working lab.** Whether a deck is not cooperating with the computer or the patron's materials are not transferring properly, problems will arise. Prepare to deal with them by establishing a troubleshooting workflow and documenting your strategies for problem-solving. Create an issue tracker or other document to keep track of issues in the lab and actions taken to correct them. That way if something goes wrong in the future, you have documentation to use for troubleshooting.

There is no perfect approach for troubleshooting. We have listed a few common strategies to get you started. As you become more comfortable with your lab setup, troubleshooting will become easier.

1) **Rely on your wiring diagram** and ensure cables are properly connected. Test new cables to ensure existing ones have not gone bad.
2) **Refer to your documentation.** Check that the settings are correct and that a button has not been accidentally pushed on a deck.
3) **Reinspect the materials** and make sure the tape cassette, film reel, or other material is not broken or degraded.
4) **Refer to equipment manuals** where available. Many can be found on the Internet Archive. Reach out to organizations like BAVC, which maintains collections of manuals.
5) **Updates can cause incompatibility**. Check if recent updates are compatible with your software and/or computer.
6) Consult the following resources:
    - AV Artifacts Atlas—a resource for identifying video and audio errors
    - Northeast Document Conservation Center—contains resources for paper-based materials, photographs, and audio preservation
    - Gaylord Archival—preservation resources and webinars such as Archival Terminology Explained

CT-1387VYD
AP304
ME11160275
APRIL 2001
ASSEMBLED IN MEXICO/ASSEMBLE AU MEXICO
TBM2AC0101-1
RISK OF ELECTRIC SHOCK DO NOT OPEN
AVIS: RISQUE DE CHOC ELECTRIQUE. NE PAS OUVRIR.
CABLE COMPATIBLE TELEVISION APPARATUS - TÉLÉVISION CÂBLOCOMPATIBLE, CANADA
PRODUCT COMPLIES WITH DHHS RULES 21 CFR SUBCHAPTER J IN EFFECT AS OF DATE OF MANUFACTURE.
DISTRIBUTED BY PANASONIC BROADCAST & TELEVISION SYSTEMS COMPANY DIVISION OF MATSUSHITA ELECTRIC CORPORATION OF AMERICA 3330 CAHUENGA BOULEVARD WEST LOS ANGELES, CA 90068
WARNING- TO PREVENT DAMAGE WHICH MAY RESULT IN FIRE OR SHOCK HAZARD, DO NOT EXPOSE THIS APPLIANCE TO RAIN OR MOISTURE.
TV RCVR
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R

San Leandro Public Library made troubleshooting easier for their volunteers by labeling the cables and corresponding ports on the equipment, a method also used by California Revealed.

## Policies, Systems and Procedures

Once you have your equipment figured out and everything is coming together, begin thinking through the various policies, systems, and procedures that will govern your lab. Ideally, your equipment and software setup and the corresponding workflows should inform these.

Namely, **you'll want to piece together governance policies, systematize scheduling, and develop documentation, workflows, and appointment procedures to clearly communicate best practices with your patrons and staff.**

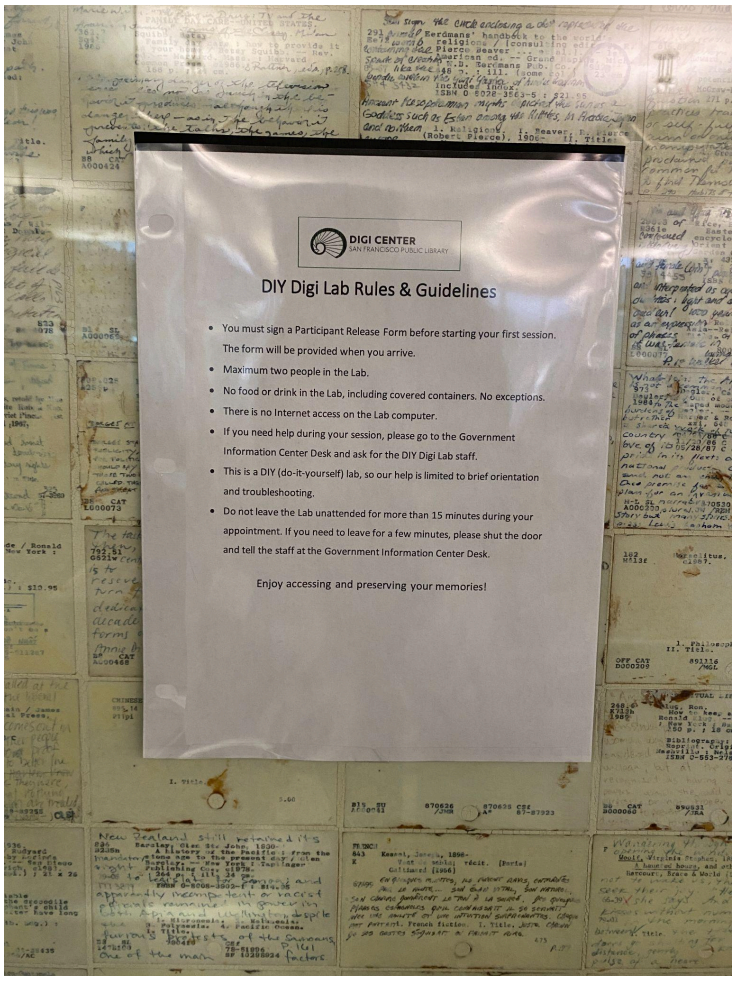
## Policies

**Memory lab policies are rules and guidelines that govern a patron's time in the lab.** They are largely dependent on your approach, model, setup, and equipment. For example, perhaps a patron needs to sign a release form at the beginning of their first appointment, or patrons can only book two appointments per month. Whatever the case, **consider how policies can guide patrons toward the best experience possible in your lab**. Furthermore, **consider how policies can give staff clear guidelines to explain to patrons.** For example, what will be your cancellation or no-show policy? What is your policy if someone accidentally breaks a piece of equipment? Jonathan at Tulare County Library provides excellent insights into policy choices in this memory lab network training video from July 2025. Consult Memory Lab Locations in California to investigate various memory lab policies.

**Be adaptable to situations that might require you to break your own rules. Figure out what is fixed and what can be reconfigured depending on the circumstance.** As Gerry Lawson from the Oral History and Language Lab at the Vancouver Museum of Anthropology reminds us, however, best practices have to be tempered with practicality. Kelly Haydon emphasizes that best practices may be unjust practices. **While you want patrons to walk away with knowledge around archival practice, digital preservation, and digitization, you also need to make sure the policies you put in place are practical for your staff and the communities you serve.** Many issues can arise when policies are overly complicated, such as making sure a patron signed the right set of forms before their appointment. While many successful labs have release forms, they have instituted policies to keep track of who has signed them to make sure everything runs smoothly.

Also, consider how certain rules or policies can unduly target certain communities. For example, who is targeted if your memory lab prevents people from scanning "obscene" material? How can this language be adapted to ensure the safety of everyone while not targeting specific communities? **In crafting policies, make sure they do not create the**

**conditions for turning people away. At the same time, use them to prioritize communities whose memories and cultural heritage have been neglected.**


DIGI CENTER
SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY
DIY Digi Lab Rules & Guidelines
You must sign a Participant Release Form before starting your first session. The form will be provided when you arrive.
Maximum two people in the Lab.
No food or drink in the Lab, including covered containers. No exceptions.
There is no Internet access on the Lab computer.
If you need help during your session, please go to the Government Information Center Desk and ask for the DIY Digi Lab staff.
This is a DIY (do-it-yourself) lab, so our help is limited to brief orientation and troubleshooting.
Do not leave the Lab unattended for more than 15 minutes during your appointment. If you need to leave for a few minutes, please shut the door and tell the staff at the Government Information Center Desk.
Enjoy accessing and preserving your memories!

Rules and guidelines are posted at each of the stations in SFPL's Digi Lab.

## Systems

The primary system you will create will center around how patrons access your memory lab. Namely, whether they will have to make an appointment or not. Some labs have implemented additional systems, especially around loaning equipment for patrons to use at home.

### Walk-in versus appointment system

**Memory labs use appointment systems in order to organize the lab's schedule, manage staff time, and get connected with patrons before they come into the lab.** Booking an

appointment is oftentimes the first point of contact between lab staff and patrons. Online forms are used to collect data about what the patron hopes to achieve during their appointment. At T.A.P.E., most people get in touch through email and then fill out an intake form. At Tehama County Library, patrons fill out an online form and then coordinate an ideal date and time with Eddie. **If you elect to create one, customize the appointment system based on your patron's needs and staff capacity.** It may not always be possible to communicate directly with each patron, but it may be necessary to guide certain folks through the process. At Tulare County Library, patrons fill out a form and book their own appointment. However, patrons who are less comfortable with technology tend to walk in without one. In these cases, Jonathan or Hunter will fill out the form for them and make the lab available if possible.

**While many labs elect for an appointment system, mobile labs often operate on a walk-in basis.** At Sonoma County Library, they have a mobile scanning lab in addition to their main lab. It is available for walk-in appointments at various branches. They have used it to test an alternative to the appointment system to see if they might begin having walk-in days for their main lab. For mobile events, walk-in appointments allow the lab to effectively serve as many patrons as possible and avoid any issues associated with late arrivals or no-shows.

Whether it's through an automatic email, online orientation, direct communication, or simply a handout for them to read, **there should be an intervention between a patron booking an appointment and them coming in to inspect their tapes.** Prepare for the inevitability of patrons cancelling or not showing up for their appointments. Implement automatic reminders and other practices that will help prevent this.

## Loaning equipment

An increasingly common conversation amongst memory labs is whether or not they want to lend equipment to patrons to digitize at home. While you most likely won't be lending your expensive or rare pieces, **loaning out an Elgato Video Capture device or 8mm film scanner may give people who are not able to come into the lab an opportunity to preserve their memories at home.** Library locations such as the San Leandro Public Library have created "Libraries of Things," where patrons can borrow various pieces of equipment. **Playback equipment can help patrons evaluate their materials and decide what they want to prioritize.** Rachel at Whittier Public Library has considered lending out a slide projector to

help people view and assess their collection before coming into the memory lab so they can decide what to digitize.

The Library of Things at San Leandro Public Library.

A closer look at the 8mm / Super 8 film scanner, one of the “things” you can borrow.

## Procedures

While policies are meant to provide a set of rules or guidelines for patrons to follow during their time in the lab, **procedures orient patrons to the lab, guide them through their appointments, and assist in training staff.**

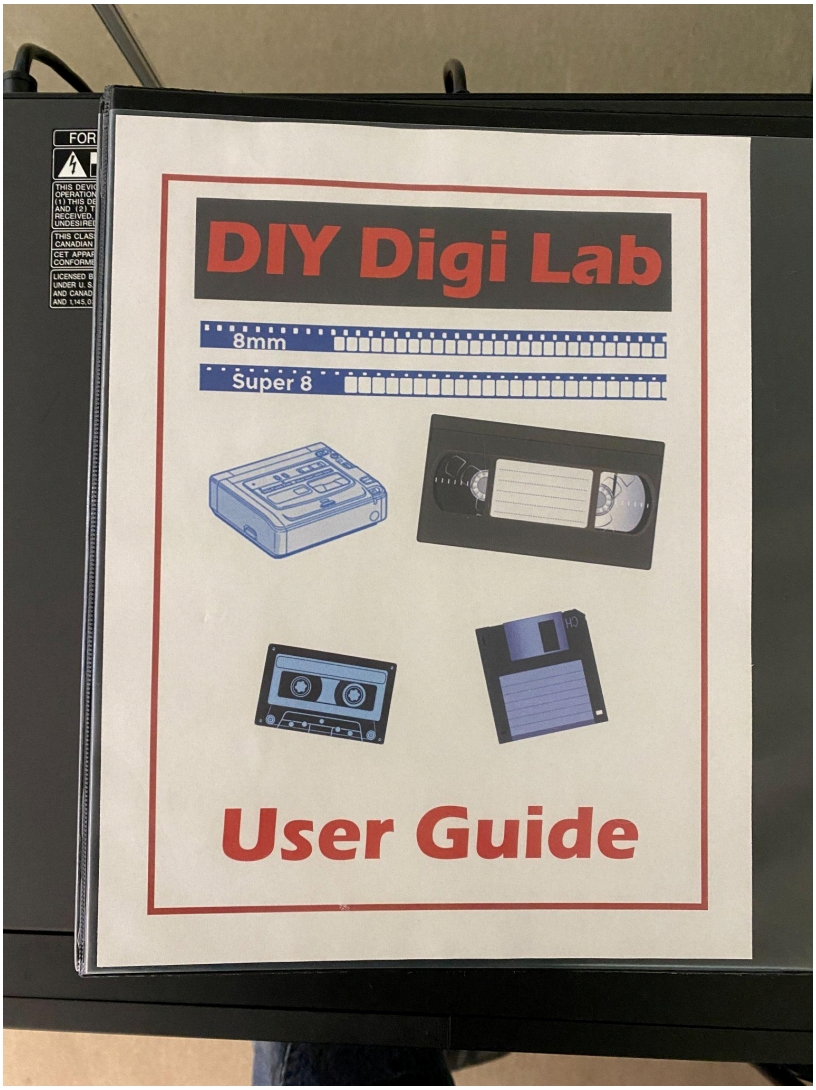
### Documentation

**Every lab should have documentation for patrons or staff to follow over the course of an appointment.** For a DIY lab, patrons consult documentation to work through the various digitization stations. For a service-based lab, staff or volunteers consult documentation when they are new to the team, need to refresh their skills, or when problems arise. It’s essential to

**make documentation that is unique to your lab and accounts for its custom workflows and setup**. Users often feel excited about the prospect of digitizing their materials in a memory lab, but a lack of documentation might scare them away from getting more involved. Make sure to include your documentation and where to find it in the orientation or first appointment. That way, they know where to go to figure things out.

Consider the languages your patrons might speak, and how you can plan ahead to **make sure the lab is accessible to as many non-English speakers as possible**. Make documentation and other resources available in additional languages by working with a translation department (if you have one), partnering with local universities or educational institutions, or paying bilingual or multilingual staff to do the translations. San Francisco Public Library's DIY Digi Lab (SFPL) worked with their in-house translation team to make their documentation available in Spanish, Chinese, and English. As such, the lab has been particularly popular amongst the Chinese-American community in San Francisco. Sonoma County's Playback Memory Lab used a vendor to translate their highly technical documentation into Spanish, while they have staff members who can provide on-site Spanish-language orientations and consultations.

**Centralize where your documentation is stored and make sure it is reviewed and updated on a regular basis, such as once every six months.** While changes to workflows may be infrequent, software and computer updates may require you to make updates. At Sonoma County Library, they use a schedule for updating their documentation. This way, it's incorporated into the overall maintenance of the lab instead of something that happens on an irregular basis. **Remember that if your documentation is translated, it will need to be retranslated when updates are made.** When introducing new equipment in the lab, update your documentation as soon as possible and use it to teach staff and patrons. Track updates to the documentation and equipment. At T.A.P.E., they have volunteers work on documentation while they are on shift. This way, they learn more about how digitization works and what each piece of equipment does. This is then reviewed and confirmed for accuracy. There is no right system, but think through one that integrates best into the workings of your lab. Check out existing documentation on memory lab websites to get ideas for formatting and language.




SFPL has printed copies of their Digi Lab documentation available for patrons to use. Translated versions are available online.

## Workflows

**Workflows** are step-by-step processes that outline how tasks are completed in your memory lab, from intake to digitization to file delivery. Workflows capture what happens, in what order, and by whom. These documents are typically not public-facing and are more useful for internal reference. For example, a workflow for digitizing a patron's home videos might include information such as how to use the equipment and how to transfer the digital files to the patron. The National City Public Library encourages people to take advantage of staff's historical memory and institutional knowledge, especially those who have been around

longest. They can share insights about patrons, operations, and what has (or hasn't) worked over time.

For a memory lab, you may need multiple workflows for different roles:

- **Core Staff:** Those designated to run and maintain the lab. At least two people should be fully trained, since staff capacity, turnover, family leave, or vacations can leave gaps. Core memory lab staff would be responsible for equipment maintenance, appointment systems, updating documentation, and other managerial tasks. Some of their operational workflows would include deck cleaning every month, documenting broken equipment, leading a memory lab orientation, and publishing new documentation.
- **Support Staff & Volunteers:** Support staff and volunteers may not be responsible for equipment maintenance or publishing documentation. However, they may need to answer patron questions about the memory lab, provide support at the orientation, and contribute to improving documentation.

Documenting and reviewing your workflows matters for several reasons:

- **Effectiveness:** By evaluating and refining processes, you can improve how work gets done.
- **Consistency:** A documented workflow acts as a checklist so nothing is missed, even if a project is paused or picked up by someone else.
- **Knowledge transfer:** Documentation ensures that institutional knowledge isn't lost if a staff member leaves or takes time off.
- **Training:** Workflows provide invaluable guidance for onboarding interns, volunteers, or new team members.

## Staff Training and Responsibilities

Training is an essential part of onboarding a new staff member or volunteer. There are endless models to follow. At T.A.P.E., they provide **1-on-1, hands-on training** that covers technical information but also helps folks understand the logic and some of the science behind digitization. This empowers volunteers in the decision-making process. For initial shifts, they

continually check in with volunteers and make sure someone is available to answer questions.

Nick at SFPL often works with interns from library school or the local city college. When training them, they **use a box of practice materials in different formats,** and they work with the equipment to get comfortable. Nikelle and Joanna at Sonoma County encourage memory labs to build a formal onboarding process that is adaptable to each new staff member. Some will be more familiar with audiovisual equipment than others, and everyone has a different learning style. They also recommend **training in groups so that people can teach each other what they know**. More people means more different knowledge bases to draw from. Furthermore, they encourage new staff to digitize their own materials in the lab.

Nikelle also emphasized that people make errors in different ways. For example, not knowing to select the proper channels on a deck. **Knowing the different ways people experience errors provides insight into training because you can teach a variety of troubleshooting tips.** Even if you have never made the error before, someone might benefit from knowing how to solve it. As issues arise during appointments or training, incorporate what you learned from them into your training model.

**Don't simply share workflows and documentation; share about how and why they were established and created**, explaining why this is the best setup for your organization so staff can extend these insights to curious patrons. On the flip side, Inyo County cautions against giving too much information, which might overwhelm or confuse new staff members. **Give just enough so they understand how to do something and a bit about why, then provide opportunities for further learning if they are interested.**

**Outline staff responsibilities for before, during, and after appointments.** South Pasadena Public Library maintains a staff guide to ensure the same steps are followed for each lab visit. If you are working with volunteers, consider which responsibilities will be delegated to them and which will be reserved for permanent staff. For example, who will be responsible for inspecting materials or cleaning the decks? **Make sure to communicate where staff can go to find out their responsibilities for each shift.**

## Orientation

**Orientation happens before a patron's first appointment and serves to inform them about the space and/or service being provided.** It can be a great way to make people feel connected to the lab and to **help avoid problems such as no-shows or cancellations.** Consider making appointment sign-ups part of the procedure to prevent people from not booking appointments after they take the orientation. **It can be online or in person, with some labs offering both options. You can elect to make it required or optional.** Places like SFPL have opted out of an orientation and instead spend hands-on time with first-timers and make themselves available to support or help during the first appointment.

At San Leandro Public Library, patrons must complete an orientation prior to transferring materials in the lab, and Angelica spoke to the popularity and effectiveness of in-person versus online training. For online orientations, labs often make a series of webinars or videos for patrons to watch before scheduling an appointment. Videos are a common choice and a useful way to communicate information to patrons. While they have proven popular, when they become outdated, it takes a lot of effort to update or remake them. Zoom orientations may help to avoid this. The person facilitating the orientation can answer questions and provide context. These choices are dependent on staffing and other resources.

**Introduce patrons to your workflows and documentation so they can review them prior to their appointment.** Additionally, introduce concepts around digital preservation so they can prepare a plan for long-term care and maintenance. Joanna and Nikelle at Sonoma County Library familiarize patrons with archival best practices and give an in-depth explanation of hard drives, how to use them, and how to care for and preserve the files on them. Leece from the Karuk Tribal Library emphasized the tension between archival standards and access. Higher quality files are not always easily accessible and are harder to store. Ultimately, people want to be able to see and share the files. They provide people some education around what works best for the devices they already use, or they figure out how they want to use the files in order to advise on what file format will fit their needs. Leece also observed that people will access files differently over time, even in five or ten years. Try to educate people on stewarding their files or where they can turn for more support.

Know that orientation is just the patrons' *first* introduction to the lab, and there will be other opportunities for them to ask questions, dive deeper, and get experience. **The goal is to get**

**them comfortable with the idea of using the equipment, but not to provide so much information that they get cold feet or disengage.**

### The First Visit

Depending on your lab's setup and the patron's familiarity with the equipment, the first appointment may require little intervention or serve as a step-by-step walkthrough. **Always make sure to inspect a patron's materials**, no matter if it's their first or tenth appointment. This is also a great opportunity to share knowledge around problems such as moldy tapes, faded color, damaged film, and more.

**While a patron is digitizing, get to know them and make them feel welcome in the space.** Especially during their first visit, they may be quite nervous. Intimidation and fear of the equipment pose a challenge for some people, but volunteers and staff can help them overcome their initial hesitations. **Regardless of setup, asking questions and making yourself available during the appointment is necessary.** Also, it can be an emotional experience to see materials featuring people who maybe passed away years before. Give them space, but be there for support if they need it.

Take what you imparted to patrons during the orientation and expand upon it during the first appointment. If you don't have an orientation or it's optional, think through some of the essential skills and knowledge you want patrons to take away from their time with you. At South Pasadena Public Library, they **democratize archival knowledge by providing patrons with strategies and best practices for maintaining a personal archive**. They also give out free thumb drives to patrons who do not have a storage device. Tulare County Library teaches people digital preservation best practices during their appointment. They ensure they make three digital copies and encourage them to check the files once per year. **The first appointment is an opportunity to set the stage for the rest of the patron's time with you.**

## Managing Expectations

Managing expectations is one of the most effective ways to prepare patrons for what they should and should not expect from their time spent in the lab. It will help you **develop relationships with your users, create clear lines of communication, and respond to patrons' needs.** It is also essential to **manage expectations for your staff**, so they can know

what they are expected to do over the course of a shift or event. Librarians excel at this and can be excellent resources for new labs looking to be proactive. This section provides examples of possible expectations patrons may have and draws from on-the-ground experiences to provide insights into how various memory labs manage them.

## “I’m going to get this done today.”

When someone arrives for an event hosted by the Inyo County Free Library’s Mobile Memory Lab, they might expect they will receive the digital files and their materials back the same day. Mike S. and Nancy M. manage expectations by letting people know that they may have to bring people’s materials back to the library in order to digitize them after their event. They communicate when and how attendees should expect to receive their files and materials back.

## “It’s going to be quick and easy.”

One of the most common expectations from patrons is that digitizing will be a quick and easy process. At Tehama County Library, they don’t call the first meeting their first appointment, they just say it’s an initial assessment. This sets patrons up for the reality that it might not work out the first time and that it may take longer than they expect. They also explain the risk associated with digitizing fragile materials. This has proven successful; when problems arise, the patrons have been prepared to deal with them.

Learn the glitches and quirks of your software and teach them to patrons and staff so they know if something is going wrong or if it is just a quirk. This will save time and headaches. Joanna K. and Nikelle R. at Sonoma County Library communicate to patrons that “an error doesn’t mean you have to stop your project.” For example, one time a patron was digitizing a VHS tape, and the color looked off. The colors appeared excessively pink and green, and the patron thought there was something wrong with the tape. In reality, the settings just needed to be adjusted.

## “Someone will be there to do everything for me.”

At South Pasadena Public Library, Olivia R. gets people set up for their first appointment, and then they do it on their own afterward. However, the website manages expectations about

staff availability by emphasizing that patrons will be entirely on their own. While Olivia will be available, the goal is to prepare people for the DIY nature of their lab.

### “My files will be easily shareable.”

The ultimate goal for most patrons is to attain and easily share their digital files. Some preservation files, such as TIFFs, are less shareable than their compressed counterparts, like JPEGs. At SFPL, Nick O. and his colleagues manage expectations by providing technical specifications up front. This way, people who care about file types, resolution, and other details will know ahead of time what options they will have. For example, a photographer might care about receiving TIFF files, while the average patron may not.

Additionally, talk with patrons about how to choose the right file by teaching them what can be done with various file types. For example, if a patron has a 2-hour video they want to share with friends, then a compressed .mp4 is better than a large .mkv file. Make them aware that they most likely won’t be able to share large files on social media, and provide them with resources for creating clips or other copies of the files in case they are interested.

## Outreach and Fundraising

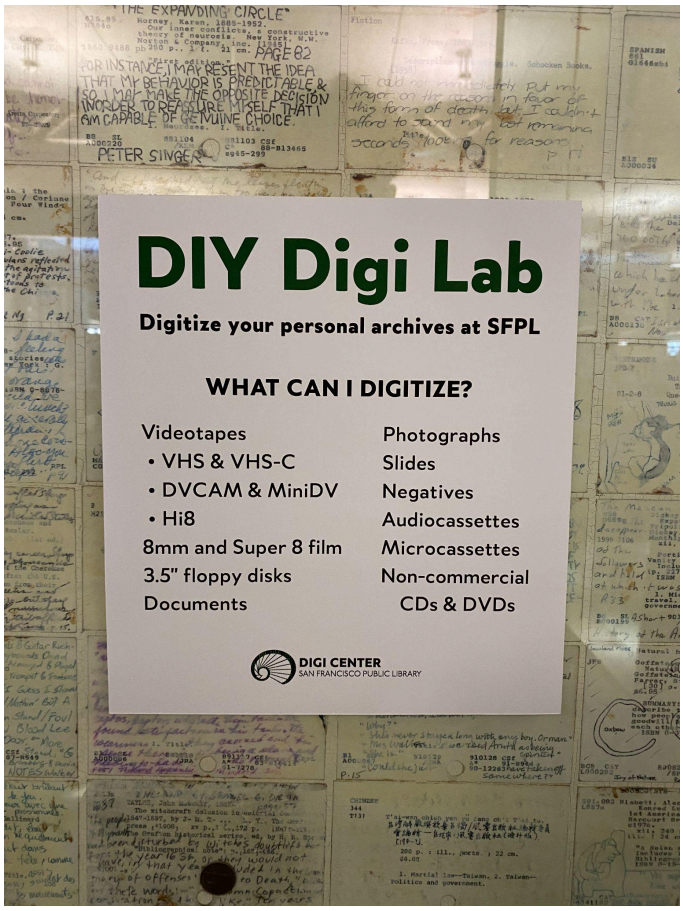
Outreach is what happens when you want to get people in the door and communicate more detailed information about your lab. It happens at different stages, with most labs recommending that you start slow on both marketing and programming. **Outreach should feel like a communal endeavor.** The goal is to bring people into the lab to work together on preserving community memory. **If it feels like a transaction, you’re not on the right track.**

### Marketing

Developing a marketing strategy that feels authentic and in line with your lab’s identity and mission is essential. Even if your memory lab is really popular and you don’t feel like marketing is necessary, **consider who is being excluded because they do not know about or are not being invited into the space.** How could marketing be targeted and also prevent an influx or overwhelm of requests? Perhaps you will invite a specific person or group into the lab or partner with an organization on a particular event. Whatever the case, **use marketing**

**to connect with the communities that you have not yet seen in the lab but want to welcome into it.**

Signage is important, particularly if you have a fixed model. **Wayfinding and self-discovery are part of the public library experience, but this is also true for any public space where people are encouraged to explore.** Consider translating signage or offering alternative ways to discover this service, i.e., providing documentation or audio recordings about the service for those who are sight and hearing impaired. Signage can be useful for mobile models, too. Think of large banners that invite people to be curious about what you're doing and encourage questions. **Signage creates an opportunity to connect more broadly with the public about what the memory lab provides, rather than a transactional service.**




Signage can also assist patrons in understanding how they can use the lab. SFPL's Digi Lab lists the various formats that can be digitized using their stations.

Developing **an online presence can also be helpful**. If you have a website, integrate memory lab events and appointments with larger library or organizational calendars. Melanie at Atascadero Public Library noted this was an easy and effective way to get people curious about your lab. Perhaps you will create a social media account like T.A.P.E.'s Instagram, or you will partner with local institutions for marketing assistance like Inyo County did with Manzanar Historic Site. San Leandro Public Library saw a large uptick in users after a local article in Patch. Also, a recent KQED interview featured numerous memory labs, and Angelica mentioned how multiple new users have come into their lab as a result.

## Welcome to the Community Memory Lab!

Arcadia Public Library's Community Memory Lab uses graphic design to showcase the types of materials people digitize in the lab and to welcome people to the space.

Many organizations struggle with maintaining interest after the initial orientation. **Develop some sort of follow-up plan or policy**, even if it's just an automatic email. Other strategies to maintain awareness include creating an email list that patrons can sign up for to learn about updates and appointment availability or maintaining a blog series around community memory and preservation. Blogs can also be a great way to stay connected to other memory labs. For example, writing a post about how you fixed your broken deck and sharing it out.

Tread carefully, however. When the memory lab at Sonoma County History & Genealogy Library first opened, they did a huge open house. It was one of the most well-attended events in the library's history, and as such, they were overwhelmed with appointment bookings. They learned that overmarketing could actually hinder access to the lab. **Do some test campaigns and targeted outreach before opening the lab up to a larger audience**, and reach out to established labs near you for ideas and support.

## Programming

Below, we've collected some specific examples from various labs around the state to illustrate how they have used programming to increase use of their lab.

### Workshops

By no means an exhaustive list, the following examples are ideas for workshops that could be implemented by your memory lab. If you are in the position to, charging a reasonable or pay-what-you-can fee is a great way to raise money to support the lab. For workshops in general, Guadalupe M. from California Revealed starts by showing participants the various materials they have digitized in the lab. It is a great way to demonstrate the reason why the memory lab exists and what it offers people.

#### Personal Archiving

From conversations with patrons, Melanie at Atascadero Public Library identified that many of them use the lab as a way to digitize materials and then get rid of the physical versions. This is not inherently wrong, but there could be some intervention that happens where the memory lab is providing archival education around how to assess your materials and decide what to get rid of, rather than just getting rid of things en masse. Check out the Memory Lab Network's Personal Archiving Class resources for more ideas.

#### Climate Change and Community Memory

Many labs have started as a response to devastating losses from wildfires and other climate disasters. Carl from National City Public Library specifically spoke to the threat climate change poses to people's personal archives and wants to use workshops as a way to teach collection organizing, file naming, digital archiving, and more. If they can take a hard drive in their go bag instead of multiple photo albums, it's safer and more practical. Also, this work is

good for grants, as it shows how memory labs are directly helping people with disaster preparedness.

### Analog Filmmaking and Working with Artists

At T.A.P.E., they teach analog filmmaking workshops for people at affordable prices. By making the media accessible, it teaches participants how to work with and create films using analog technology. In doing so, it brings these technologies back into cultural use. These films can then be digitized in the memory lab, creating an ecosystem that supports the entire creative process, from inception to preservation. Additionally, they present the films at screening nights, where filmmakers receive feedback and celebrate their visions. BAVC partners with many artists who use the Playback Lab to digitize tapes or to assess an existing collection to decide which tapes they want to have digitized professionally. **Outreach is an opportunity to imagine how your memory lab can support the community in more than just preservation work.**

## Events

### In-person

Inyo County Free Library hosts mobile memory lab events throughout the year. They **use these events to connect with new patrons, partner with organizations around the county, and build their local history collection.** They also use mobile lab events to train folks in other locations how to scan and digitize. They recommend having at least one person who is dedicated to digitizing (if possible) in a different room, while another person manages expectations and inspects media. Events often lead to patrons calling their friends and family members and inviting them to attend. For example, during the Memories Without Borders Project, only one person responded to the online form, but at the events, patrons called other folks they thought would be interested, and the turnout became much larger.

For events in fixed locations, **genealogy fairs tend to work really well.** This can be a great way to bring new people into the lab and a good opportunity to partner with local organizations focused around ethnic studies, genealogy, or local history. Also, home movie and home video days tend to be a big hit. Check out the Center for Home Movies for resources.

### Virtual

**Virtual programs can be an affordable and accessible alternative to in-person events.** Leece from the Karuk Tribal Library noted that a lot of folks have connected over shared ancestry through newly digitized photos. Perhaps you can create an event or page where people from the community can share what they have digitized so others can make connections.

Marisa S. from Orange County Public Library's Memory Lab spoke to the success of their OC Stories project, which gives people the chance to submit photos and stories about their personal relationship to Orange County. While it's not explicitly tied to the memory lab, it offers lab users a way to share what they digitized. A similar project could be pursued on social media, on your website, or at events. Be sure to track which materials were digitized in the lab!

### Partnerships

**It's essential to go to outside events and connect with people outside the lab.** Build relationships to make memory lab projects more collaborative. Tulare County Library loans out their mobile lab through the Museum Alliance of Tulare-Kings County. T.A.P.E.'s ethos is **"Advocacy, not advertising."** By building relationships through events, people end up reaching out to get their tapes digitized or to volunteer. They partnered with the Black Image Center on a Black family archiving event and met many folks who ended up working with them afterward.

Also, don't give up if you reach out to partner on an event and someone from the organization says no. Perhaps this isn't the right person for the partnership, or the organization is not in the right place to support. Take some time, rethink the idea, and approach a new person or consider a different outreach strategy. **Many folks are still learning what memory labs are, and it may take time and a bit of persistence to achieve your programming goals.**

## Fundraising

Fundraising is not always essential, but it can be integrated into your outreach strategy. Historically, funding for memory labs came from federal, state, or institutional grants or private donors. However, there are now numerous self-funded labs and others have started or

expanded using new public funding allocations. Self-funded labs need various streams of income to remain sustainable. Get creative with fundraising by using Patreon, workshops, events, GoFundMe, or other crowdfunding sites. Mellon grants for community-based archives have also proven successful. If you choose to seek out major donors, donations may come with strings attached. Consider the various tradeoffs, such as if the donation is worth the additional oversight in developing your memory lab.

## Evaluation and Sustainability

Memory labs are essential spaces for developing, preserving, expanding, and sustaining community memory. By instituting effective evaluation measures, you can ensure that yours is sustainable for years to come. Putting policies in place to protect your equipment and ensuring you have adequate staffing will help you mitigate the issues that arise with an active memory lab. **Make sustainability one of your priorities, and use it to guide your decision-making as you evolve in the future.**

One of the best ways to evaluate the effectiveness of your memory lab is to **send a follow-up survey to patrons.** At SFPL, a questionnaire is automatically sent out after an appointment. Nick and other librarians compile comments and feedback every six months. They look at requests for certain types of media to think about what might be purchased or different services to offer. Furthermore, they consider what other improvements could be made to the Digi Lab.

**You can use a survey to capture stories from patrons, learn what they have done with their files, and track what and how much is being digitized.** Olivia at South Pasadena Public Library spoke about doing a 3- or 6-month check-in to see how patrons have used and managed their files. At Sonoma County Library, they track where patrons are from in the county so they know where to focus their outreach efforts. **Evaluate which communities are not taking advantage of your lab and consider how you might extend specific outreach to them.**

The Staff section addresses some of the ways to prepare for staffing changes. **Evaluation and sustainability are an iterative process that ensures the lab continues working well.** Not preparing for staffing changes can interrupt this process. Have a turnover or contingency plan

should the person in charge of the lab leave the position. Consider who will be in charge of updating and maintaining documentation to make sure patrons are not receiving outdated information. To prepare for her retirement from Karuk Tribal Library, Bari T. mentored Leece L. from March to June 2025. This prepared Leece to take over the memory lab once Bari left. Consider the benefits of mentorship, and if a transition is coming, prepare by having new staff members shadow current ones.

In regards to sustainability, there are a few important things to consider. If you are going to move the memory lab to a new location, think about how documentation, orientation, and other elements will need to be updated. If you are holding onto a patron's files for an extended period of time, centralize data collection and storage. Have a location off-site where backups are stored. This can be done through cloud storage or dedicated hard drives. **Centralizing processes can aid in organizational sustainability, while decentralizing others can create space for creativity and adaptability.** Be discerning about what processes would benefit from being streamlined and what ones should be tailored to the specific needs of staff and patrons.

**The main priority for sustaining lab equipment is deck cleaning and deck maintenance.** For maintenance, make sure decks are turned off when not in use and that patron materials are inspected before each appointment to prevent mold, dust, or other debris from damaging the playback equipment.

Deck cleaning is a process that requires training and practice. It often involves cleaning the heads on video or audio playback equipment. However, it can also include cleaning film scanners or other technology you have in your lab. **We recommend not cleaning your decks until you have been trained by someone who knows how to clean them.** Reach out to memory labs or other audiovisual organizations to see if someone might be able to train you. Just like with documentation updates, many labs create a deck cleaning schedule to track when the decks were last cleaned and when they should be cleaned again.

Nick at SFPL emphasized the importance of deck cleaning and deck maintenance. It has been integrated into their workflow and is an essential part of lab maintenance and upkeep. The obsolete and fragile equipment used in labs lasts longer if people know how to maintain and take care of it. Cleaning heads is something anyone can do, but not something most people

have experience with. While it can feel intimidating, it's not so hard once you get the hang of it.

The deck cleaning schedule that San Leandro Public Library's Memory Lab uses. They keep it stored on the rack for easy viewing.

**Sustainability and evaluation work hand in hand. They do not always mean growth; it can also mean reflecting on everyone's capacity and interest.** It's okay to scale back and reevaluate to focus on what works. There is a difference between something not working versus posing a challenge. Whittier Public Library noted, "We have other equipment, but I just don't know if people are not familiar with it or intimidated by it." A common challenge is that patrons avoid equipment that makes them nervous or that they don't fully understand. This points to a broader issue across memory labs: valuable technology can go underutilized if

users lack confidence. Addressing this may require extra orientation, low-stakes opportunities for hands-on practice, or rethinking how DIY workflows are introduced. It also reflects the organizational "kinks" that surface when balancing access, training, and realistic use of lab resources.

When you have everything set up and people are coming in, take time to celebrate and be proud of the work you have done. **Once you get started and appointments are getting booked, be patient with some of the initial hiccups and inevitable bumps in the road.** No matter how many times you tested out the setup before you opened it to the public, there is a strong likelihood something won't work like it's meant to. It's totally normal. Take it as a learning opportunity or a chance to lean on other labs for support. Be open to changes, opportunities, and new ideas. **Memory labs are resilient spaces that thrive when they're working in step with the priorities and needs of the communities they serve.** While we want labs to last forever, we know they will constantly evolve and change, with new ones popping up and established ones closing every year. Take care of what matters and ground yourself in the values, community, and mission that led you to the work in the first place.

# Additional Resources

## Accessibility

CSUN Universal Design Center

Access free resources about accessible information sharing, including video tutorials, presentations, and examples.

## Equipment

Ashley Blewer's Minimum* Viable Station Documentation

Though it has not been updated recently, this document offers suggestions for setting up various digitization stations and provides in-depth information around TBCs, AD converters, and other equipment.

Other World Computing

Online marketplace for purchasing refurbished Mac computers, hard drives, cables, and more. Thank you to Jessica Gonzales at T.A.P.E. for introducing us to this resource.

Sixteen Millimeter

Free and open-source tools for analog filmmaking, including templates for 3D printing film cores and other archival materials. Thank you to Jackie Forsyte at T.A.P.E. for introducing us to this resource.

The Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) Resources

Open-source tools, format guides, webinars, disaster recovery resources, and oral histories centered around audiovisual preservation.

AMIA Global Supplier Directory

Director of worldwide suppliers for audiovisual equipment, including decks and related materials.

B&H Photo

Trusted online supplier of a vast array of audiovisual equipment.

Markertek Video Supply

Trusted online supplier of video and audio equipment. Great customer service department who works with you when you have questions or need help troubleshooting.

Sweetwater Sound, Inc.

Trusted online supplier of audio-focused equipment. Great customer service department that works with you when you have questions or need help troubleshooting.

Blackmagic Design

One of the most highly regarded creators of video and digitization technology, including AD converters. Great customer service department that works with you when you have questions or need help troubleshooting.

## Setup and Training

The Finding Aid–DIY Digitization Blog Series

Featuring blog posts from various memory lab staff around California and in other parts of the country.

Memory Lab–Running Resources Google Drive

A collection of training videos, slides, and information handouts compiled by California Revealed.

Memory Lab Training Videos

Recorded webinars and training videos compiled by California Revealed on the Internet Archive.

Memory Lab Support: Training and Preservation–California Revealed

California Revealed's collection of resources and support for memory labs. Learn how to join the California Memory Lab Support listserv.

Memory Lab–California State Library

Information page from the California State Library with additional considerations for setting up a memory lab.

Memory Lab Network

Github site for the Memory Lab Network put together by the DC Public Library. Though no longer updated, there are some helpful resources, including a zine library and helpful trainings.

Los Angeles Public Library's Think Like An Archivist! YouTube Training

LAPL's Digitization & Special Collection librarians Suzanne Im and Rose Knopka teach folks how to think like archivists when working with materials.

## Memory Lab Locations in California

The following is a list of current memory labs in California. Some of these can also be viewed on the map of California Memory Labs, which is ordered based on grant cycle. Have you started a lab recently? Let us know at team@californiarevealed.org

### Northern California

Karuk Tribal Library–Memory Lab and Sípnuuk Digital Archive, Library, and Museum

Tehama County Library–Retro Technology Lab

Butte County Library, Gridley Branch–Memory Lab

Woodland Public Library–Memory Lab

Sacramento Public Library–Media Preservation Project

### Bay Area

Los Gatos Library–Retro Tech
Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC)–SF COMMONS Playback Lab
Palo Alto City Library–Vintage Media Lab
San Jose King Library–Retro Tech
Santa Clara Central Park Library–Retro Tech: Preserving Memories Project
San Francisco Public Library (SFPL)–DIY Digi Lab
Alameda Free Library–Memory Lab
Napa County Library–Memory Lab
San Leandro Public Library–DIY and Mobile Memory Lab
Belvedere Tiburon Library–Digital Media Lab
Sonoma County History & Genealogy Library–Playback Memory Lab

## Eastern California

Inyo County Free Library–Mobile Memory Lab

## Central California

County of San Luis Obispo Public Libraries, Atascadero Branch–DIY Memory Lab
Tulare County Library–Memory Lab

## Southern California

### Los Angeles Area

Los Angeles Public Library Central Branch–Memory Lab
Teach Archive Preserve Exhibit (T.A.P.E.) Los Angeles–Digitization Service
Glendale Library, Arts & Culture–Memory Lab
Orange County Public Libraries, Tustin Branch–OC Memory Lab
Arcadia Public Library–Community Memory Lab
South Pasadena Public Library–Memory Lab
Placentia Library District–Memory Lab
Whittier Public Library–DIY Digital Memory Lab

Anaheim Public Library–Memory Lab

San Diego Area

San Diego Central Library–Digital Memory Lab
San Diego La Jolla Riford Library–Digital Memory Lab
National City Public Library–Community Memory Lab
Chula Vista Public Library Civic Center Branch–Memory Lab
South Chula Vista Library–Memory Lab
Chula Vista Public Library–Memory Lab

## Other Memory Lab Projects

Marisa Hicks-Alcaraz Projects
Various memory lab projects centered around Latina and Latinx memory work and the Memory Lab at the Urbana Makerspace in Illinois.

Entre Film Center–Día de los Muertos Moving Image Ofrenda
Information about Entre Film Center's partnership with the Texas Archive of the Moving Image (TAMI), which offered free digitization of Texas-made films such as home movies, where they collected over 2,000 film and video materials from across the Rio Grande Valley.

XFR Collective
A nonprofit organization located in Brooklyn that partners with artists, activists, individuals, and groups to lower the barriers to preserving at-risk audiovisual media. Many of their resources are provided on GitHub, including access to their documentation.

# Abbreviations Key

Memory lab locations are at times referred to by a shortened version of their name, such as Inyo County or Sonoma County Library. Additional abbreviations of certain labs are as follows:

T.A.P.E.—Teach Archive Preserve Exhibit Los Angeles
SFPL—San Francisco Public Library
OCPL—Orange County Public Libraries

BAVC—Bay Area Video Coalition
LAPL—Los Angeles Public Library

# Credit

Leece L. at Karuk Tribal Library
Angelica P. at San Leandro Public Library
Nancy M. and Mike S. at Inyo County Free Library
Jackie F. and Jessica G. at Teach Archive Preserve Exhibit (T.A.P.E.) Los Angeles
Nick O. at San Francisco Public Library
Carl A. at National City Library
Jonathan W. and Hunter T. at Tulare County Library
Olivia R. at South Pasadena Public Library
Joanna K. and Nikelle R. at Sonoma County History & Genealogy Library
Eddie P. at Tehama County Library
Marisa S. at Orange County Public Libraries
Melanie B. at Atascadero Public Library
Rachel F. at Whittier Public Library
Kiki F. and Chris C. at Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC)
Gerry Lawson
Kelly Haydon

This handbook was created in 2025 by Wilde Davis, California Memory Lab Intern and AMIA Pathways Fellow, in collaboration with Guadalupe Martinez and California Revealed. It is based on insights and anecdotes from memory lab partners around California.